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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 8387
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0169
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0149
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0150
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0164

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000152

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION YEAR PORK BARREL POLITICS IN OSUN STATE

REF: 06 LAGOS 1364

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: To improve his heretofore tepid and scattered support, Osun State Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola has actively distributed patronage in the run up to the April 2007 election. His main opponent is Action Congress (AC) candidate Rauf Aregbesola, whose campaign theme is Oyinlola has mostly wasted the people's money and has little concrete to show for his four years in office. Notwithstanding these criticisms, Oyinlola's control of the levers of power means this People's Democratic Party (PDP) Governor is in the driver's seat to claim a second term. End summary.

Osun State Visit Shows Oyinlola Strengthening

¶2. (U) Osun State People's Democratic Party (PDP) Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola was a professional soldier. After serving in the peacekeeping force in Somalia, Oyinlola served as Administrator of Lagos under the Abacha regime from 1993 to 1996. He reportedly amassed a fortune in the process. After retiring from the military in 1999, Oyinlola spent a brief interlude in the UK before running for Governor of Osun State in 2003, defeating incumbent Governor Bisi Akande of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in a disputed outcome.

¶3. (C) Some political observers predicted Oyinlola would face a difficult election in 2007. Political Science Lecturer Adeolu Durotoye of the University of Ibadan told Poloff his contacts indicated Oyinlola was unpopular and was facing a difficult opponent in Action Congress (AC) candidate Rauf Aregbesola. However, Durotoye's contacts now indicated a turning in favor of Oyinlola. Poloff's visit on January 23-24 showed Oyinlola has strengthened his position as he has initiated politically popular projects.

¶4. (U) A visit to Oshogbo showed some activity and construction, though the city experienced numerous power outages. Home to the UN Cultural Heritage Site the Oshogbo Shrines, the city has a new hotel and growing art activity. Roads were passable. Some were good. Poloff noticed however

the road connecting Oshogbo to the Akure-Ibadan highway, repaved last year, had already deteriorated considerably.

Development Projects and the Chinese Help Oyinlola

¶5. (U) Poloff met the Osun State Governor's Press Secretary, Lasisi Olagunju. Brimming with confidence, Olagunju boasted of Oyinlola's achievements in roads, electricity, school construction, and poverty alleviation. Visitors have assessed Osun's agricultural potential, but no agreement with them has yet been reached.

¶6. (U) Liadi Gbadamosi, a local government administrator, said Oyinlola worked with the 30 Local Government Administrations (LGA) to plan a development strategy. Each Local Government Council (LGC) received 5 million naira (approximately \$39,000) for development to spend as they saw fit. This, Gbadamosi remarked, was to allow the LGCs to have projects they can point to as their accomplishments.

¶7. (C) Olagunju told Poloff a new Chinese pharmaceutical factory would bring jobs to Osun State. Oyinlola has been to China twice, Olagunju explained, and the Chinese government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to build a \$15 million factory to manufacture anti-malarial drugs. Olagunju predicted the factory would be finished by June 2007, a prediction which startled Aregbesola Campaign Manager Felix Awofisayo.

New University Well-Timed for the Election

¶8. (U) Oyinlola has also been aggressively promoting new

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projects. To much local fanfare, Oyinlola laid the cornerstone for Osun State University on January 23. The Guardian editor in Oshogbo, Seun Adeoyi, told Poloff there had been public clamor for a state university, which had gone unheeded until now. Oyinlola had plans for a university with five satellite campuses throughout the State. Each satellite campus would have a ceremonial event which will generate more positive publicity for the Governor, Adeoyi said.

¶9. (C) The opposition previously had cited the lack of a university as a failure of the Governor, but Oyinlola had effectively quashed this argument, Adeoyi asserted. Adeoyi told Poloff that Oyinlola claims the mantle of the late Bola Ige, who strongly supported education as a stepping-stone to development. Oyinlola delayed until now to announce the university because he wanted to amass the proper funding, Adeoyi asserted.

¶10. (C) Commenting for the Aregbesola campaign, Awofisayo charged Oyinlola delayed the university project because he actually did not see it as a priority. Oyinlola waited until the election season to announce the project for maximum political impact with minimal fiscal strain, according to Awofisayo. Awofisayo termed the university project a "crude political ploy". "Responsible government", Awofisayo remarked, "will not wait until the last moment to implement a university project".

EFCC Investigation No Impediment to Oyinlola

¶11. (C) On corruption, Adeoyi said although the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) listed Oyinlola as one of the 31 Governors under investigation, the EFCC had not given its results. Interestingly, Adeoyi told Poloff Oyinlola was popular because people knew the Governor was independently wealthy and did not need to help himself to the State

treasury. (Comment: In 2005 Oyinlola was caught in the Ikoyi housing scandal. In Ikoyi, a wealthy neighborhood of Lagos, many prominent Nigerians including Oyinlola received favorable terms for prime housing. End comment)

AC Opposition Hurt by Attacks, Still Resilient

¶12. (C) The opposition AC has provided the strongest opposition to PDP, but the AC has had to deal with recent defections and PDP criticism of its candidate. Aregbesola, the former Lagos State Commissioner for Public Works, is a close ally of Lagos Governor Bola Tinubu. According to Adeoyi, some in Osun felt Tinubu had imposed Aregbesola on the State. Because of his ties to Lagos, some people in Osun see Aregbesola as an outsider.

¶13. (C) Moreover, the legacy of Bisi Akande's governorship may harm the AC in Osun. Akande is currently the AC National Chairman. As Osun Governor, Akande made the fiscally prudent but politically maladroit move of dismissing thousands of teachers. Conversely, Oyinlola brought back some of the teachers. Akande, a blunt, straight-talking person, made similarly unpopular moves and this has affected how some voters view the AC, Adeoyi said.

¶14. (C) Awofisayo claimed the State is yearning for a change. Oyinlola has lacked focus and planning, Awofisayo continued. The 900 million naira (approximately \$7 million) honeycomb roads projects to link villages to the state road network went for naught. Oyinlola claimed credit for international aid projects he had nothing to do with, Awofisayo charged. On the other hand, Akande built the state secretariat, initiated a World Bank development project, and was fiscally responsible. In response to claims that Aregbesola is a carpetbagger, Awofisayo replied Aregbesola has always had ties to Osun and owns a home in Ilesha. Osun politicians, Awofisayo pointed out, often leave the State only to return later.

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Comment

¶15. (C) Oyinlola, who has been on the Nigerian political scene for a long time, has the state government and PDP machinery as his support and can point to some development projects and progress as warranting a second term. Objectively, his record for achievement is mediocre. While some roads are good, many appear to be deteriorating again and Osun has done little to create a better environment for economic growth. The much-lauded university has barely broken ground. With Obafemi Awolowo University already in Osun one wonders whether Osun really needed another. However, Oyinlola's favor with Obasanjo has won the State a promise from the Chinese to construct a pharmaceutical factory. The opposition will try to expose the weakness in Oyinlola's claims, but the Governor's use of patronage has bolstered his support and has presented the opposition an uphill climb. End comment.
BROWNE